

Part 4: Market Feasibility

Determining market feasibility is the first step in determining if a market in your community will be a success and involves two critical segments: consumers and producers.

- Usually enough support from consumers and producers develops as marketing opportunities become apparent.
- Continued participation is assured if a balance between buyers and sellers occurs when the market first opens.
- **A good Rule of Thumb: A half-dozen consistent, quality conscious sellers and 100 regular shoppers justify a farmers' market.**

A community farmers' market has four concerns regarding **consumer preferences**: good quality; adequate quantities; reasonable prices; and conveniently located facilities. Nearby roadside stands and pick-your-own farms could reduce the demand for goods at the farmers' market.

Research has shown that assuring an adequate number of **producers** as sellers at a farmers' market is probably more important than evaluating consumer numbers in planning the market. Five to ten producers providing a variety of items over the entire local production season are all that are needed to start a farmers' market.

To keep these producers selling, average daily sales exceeding \$100 per producer are needed. With an average daily sale to each customer of \$10, 100 buyers must be present each day to support a minimum market. About 25-30 farmers are needed for best results during peak sales periods, and these require more than 300 customers to support them at the \$100 per day sales level. That all depends on the size and scope of your local community.

Other factors to evaluate when considering market feasibility include:

- Percentage of population in and around community with gardens;
- Quality and prices at the local retail food stores;
- Existence of other nearby farmers' markets;
- Existence of nearby roadside stands and u-pick farms;
- Existence of wholesale merchants who sell to consumers;
- Tastes and preferences of consumers;
- Socio-economic mix of consumers;
- Production and marketing experience of potential growers;
- Consumer confidence in producers for providing safe, quality products;
- Attitude toward the market by government officials, human resource agency officials, commercial business people, and the agricultural community;
- Expectations of the community (and are they attainable?);
- Cooperativeness of producers with each other; and
- Interest and support of various segments of the professional agricultural community, such as Extension agents and specialists, county agriculture committees, State Department of Agriculture, and educational institutions.